

Something to live for

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Something to live for

by [Epifauna](#)

Summary

Soap freezes as he hears that infamous piece of fabric slip away.

“Thought you slept in that thing,” he tries to quip, but the strain in his voice is obvious.

“Shut up, Soap,” Ghost grumbles, slipping into bed behind him, “move over.”

or

Being the last ones to the safehouse means Soap and Ghost get last pick of the bedrooms, but thankfully they're more than used to being in close quarters with each other.

Notes

This idea came to me between literal fever dreams and would not leave me until I wrote it out, so have stupid pining Soap and cuddly Ghost

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

“Who’re we meant to be meeting here, anyway?”

Soap asks as he emerges from the treeline and into the cool moonlight, flanked by Ghost; his hulking figure all but fading into the darkness around them were it not for that alabaster mask.

“Los Vaqueros, Graves, and a few of his shadows,” Ghost responds, “we don’t move out ‘til midday tomorrow, though, so we can convene with them in the morning.”

They approach a large, squat building that Soap would almost assume was abandoned were it not for the tiny slivers of light escaping from gaps in blackout paint and boarded windows. The military had a cheek calling it a ‘safe’ house if you asked him. Nevertheless, they find the front door and Ghost raises a hand and rhythmically raps on the wood.

“Was that Super Mario?” Soap chides.

“Shh,” Ghost hisses, pulling a small throwing knife from his belt and hiding it at the back of his forearm as footsteps approach from inside. A tense moment passes as the bolts click open and the handle turns, but as soon as a slender form and a familiar face comes into view, both men relax at last.

“Alejandro!” Soap greets from over his Lieutenant’s shoulder, as Ghost quietly slips his blade back into its resting spot—though not before it catches Alejandro’s eye.

“Always prepared, aren’t you Lieutenant?” He remarks earnestly.

“Better to be safe than sorry,” Ghost shrugs.

“Anyway, it’s good to see you Hermanos, I was getting worried.” Alejandro welcomes, stepping out of the doorway and giving both men a firm hug as they pass.

“Good to see you too, mate. I’d swear we’ll be early next time, but I don’t think there’s anything we’ll ever be early for,” Soap laughs sheepishly.

“Our deaths, maybe,” Ghost deadpans, moving past him to survey their surroundings.

“Bienvenido to you too, Ghost,” Alejandro chuckles sarcastically. They

follow the colonel as he leads them down the halls of the dimly lit safehouse: a place as quaint and dull inside as out, he was now realising, with dark wall paper, discoloured carpets and amber light bulbs in a style Soap wasn't sure they made any more.

"Is everyone else here already?" Ghost murmurs, dragging a gloved finger tip across a dusty cabinet.

"Yes, the last of them about an hour ago. You could learn from their time management skills."

"We *were* making good time, but a certain someone can't stay out of trouble for more than ten fucking minutes," Soap tenses as a steely gaze is directed his way.

"How was I supposed to know the detour *you* took us on led us right through Narco territory?" Soap defends, scoffing when Ghost has the audacity to *roll his eyes* at him .

"Anyway, since you two are the last, I'm afraid there's only one room left. Unless you plan to kick a shadow out of theirs."

"I'm not above it," Ghost clicks his tongue, glancing into a grimy-looking mess room as they pass.

They reach the end of the hall and Alejandro pushes open a door, stepping aside as the other men enter. While spacious, the room feels oddly barren, with a small desk, a beat up armchair in the corner and rotten, peeling wallpaper. He's so distracted by the odd decorations and by the ominous painting hung on one of the far walls that it takes Soap a moment to lay his eyes on the bed.

Bed, singular. Mattress a small double at best.

"How cliché," Ghost sighs.

"The military really spares no expenses," Soap grumbles. Though when Ghost beside him takes a step forward, suddenly some primal monkey part of his brain has him lunging forward, launching himself onto the bed and yelling "*bagsy!*" as he does so, sprawling out over the thin sheets protectively. Ghost just stares at him incredulously for a moment, before shaking his head.

"Fuck this, where's Graves's room? He's getting booted," Ghost shrugs off his chest rig and tilts his head, cracking both sides of his neck in quick succession.

Alejandro chuckles, “just don’t come knocking on the third door down, I sleep with a loaded pistol.”

“What’s your weapon of choice?” Soap lifts his head up, curiosity piqued.

“X12, Las Almas standard,” Alejandro shrugs.

Soap nods appreciatively, “I’m partial to an M1911 myself,” he remarks as he begins to remove his own accessories and try his best to relax into the rock-hard mattress below him. It’s not perfect—it’s barely even good—but after days of sleeping in cars or hard surfaces while he and Ghost took turns keeping watch, he’s relieved to finally have a bed to sleep in. The only time he had been more comfortable was when in his drowsy state he’d proclaimed Ghost’s lap as his pillow and curled up like a cat in the dirt. To his surprise, he hadn’t been kicked away or cussed out, and he was sure he’d dreamt it, but he could almost swear he’d felt fingers carding through his hair as he drifted off.

They bid Alejandro farewell as he decides he’s going to go raid the mess room for rations, and Ghost finally moves further into the room, approaching the far windows. It’s only when he sees him waving a gloved hand by the glass that Soap notices the gaping hole in it—smashed by a rock of some sort most likely—allowing moonlight to seep in.

“They even give us air-con around here? I feel spoiled,” Soap sneers.

“Fuckin’ shithole,” Ghost mutters under his breath, “I’ve been held hostage in nicer places than this.”

“Now those sound like good bedtime stories.”

“Not sure you’re old enough for them. Might give you nightmares,” Ghost drawls, catching the boot that Soap launches at him and returning it with such force that Soap has to dive off the bed to avoid being hit.

Soap quickly jumps back onto the sheets, returning to his lounging position as Ghost tentatively settles into the old armchair, before cursing and jumping back up again. He turns to glare at the offending piece of furniture, muttering about *bloody fucking springs and bloody cheapass military bastards*.

He sighs, crossing to the side of the bed by the door and simply says,

“Move.”

“No shot,” Soap says, and suddenly he isn’t a highly trained S.A.S. operative, but a child on his back with his legs curled up to his chest, ready to kick out to defend his position.

“Johnny,” Ghost warns, “we both know how that will end.”

“I’ll die before I sleep on another wooden floor for at least another week,” Soap threatens, following Ghost’s movements as the Brit slips off his own boots and kicks them under the bed.

“Turn around.”

“And turn my back on an enemy? Never.”

“Is that what I am to you? An enemy?” Ghost asks with mock hurt in his voice, catching Soap’s ankles and shoving him away as he moves closer. Soap tries in vain to get at him again, but in a split second he’s pinned in a fetal position under the weight of Ghost’s body, their faces so close Soap could feel his breath fan against his cheek, were it not for that damned mask. “Stand down, sergeant.” Ghost commands, all-too-gently considering their proximity. Soap swallows thickly and obeys, letting his body grow limp. “There’s a good boy,” he mocks.

That gets Soap to finally turn his head away, as he refuses to be seen blushing like a fucking school girl under the irreverent praise. He also refuses to acknowledge the fact he misses the heat of Ghost’s body as soon as he moves away. He instead busies himself with focusing on the sounds coming from behind him, registering that of material rustling and being thrown to the floor. Curiosity quickly gets the best of him and he attempts to take a peek, noticing first that the other’s gloves had been discarded, and second that a bare thumb was hooked under his mask, raising it just high enough to expose scarred lips. Then there’s a firm yet gentle hand on his jaw, pushing his head back into the pillow.

“I said turn around,” Ghost instructs in that soft voice again before falling silent, leaving Soap to freeze as he hears that infamous piece of fabric slip away.

“Thought you slept in that thing,” Soap tries to quip, but the strain in his voice is obvious.

“Shut up, Soap,” Ghost grumbles, slipping into bed behind him, “move over.”

Fuck, Soap had never heard his voice so clearly. His mask didn't do a lot to muffle it, but after spending so much time in close quarters with him, the change is there.

"It'll be a tight squeeze, sir," he forces out, though he shuffles forward anyway.

"We'll make do," is the simple response, impossibly close as Ghost settles in behind him, mere inches away.

Soap wanted to fucking kick himself. It wasn't like he hadn't slept with someone like this before—because he *had*. There'd been plenty of occasions since joining the army where he'd ended up curled up beside comrades and friends, whether it'd been to keep warm on cold nights, because it was where he'd passed out after a night of drinking, or just because he'd needed the warmth after a long day.

The first time he'd ever taken someone's life, he hadn't been able to sleep for days, until exhaustion finally caught up with him on a long-haul flight and he'd passed out with his head on Price's shoulder, only to wake up with the Captain's stupid boonie on his head, shielding his eyes from the light of the rising sun.

This wasn't new territory for him, so why the hell was the tingle of Ghost's breath against the back of his neck making his heart rate tick up? The feeling that blossoms inside of him is electric, and he'd be elated by it were he not so humiliated. He's fully grown, not just some cadet boy any more goddammit.

He lets out an unconscious sigh as he tries to quiet his thoughts, somehow forgetting that the physical proximity he was hyper aware of also meant that no noises could escape careful ears.

"Everything good, Johnny?" All-too-soft. All-too-caring. Soap wants to hit him just so he'll yell at him or cuss him out or say anything that isn't so damn *fond*.

He focuses his entire attention on the question, realising the fact his front half is practically hanging off the edge of the bed, the fact the draft from the hole in the window is chilling his arms, and the fact they don't even have a sheet to tuck over themselves as they try to sleep. He voices all of these complaints in response, hoping they're good enough reason to dismiss any of his strange, crabbit behaviour as he attempts to quell the embers of his childish crush.

The man behind him just listens quietly, giving a hum in response. A

few moments pass, then suddenly there's a broad hand on his stomach and he's being dragged backward. Before he can even process it, his back is flush with the rippling muscles of Ghost's front and his arm is gently draped around his middle. Soap goes rigid, stunned into stillness by disbelief, and Ghost must feel it as that warm arm immediately begins to slide away.

"Sorry," he says, "thought this would fix your problems. I can give you my coat if you need a cover."

In a cruel twist of fate, fixing all his phoney problems had only made his real one worse, and now he had no excuses to hide behind and even less space to do it. "No, I'm alright...thank you." The heat coming off of his face alone would be able to warm the entire building for weeks to come.

Ghost just hums again in response, somehow shifting even closer as he gets comfortable, resting his other arm on the pillow above both of their heads.

"Not wasting an inch of space, huh Lt?" Soap tries to joke.

"Course not, I need the heat too. I think it'd be warmer outside than in this glorified shed."

Soap chuckles dryly, finally letting himself relax as he tries to work up his usual cocky attitude. "You know, I always took you for a little spoon. I hear that big guys like to feel small sometimes."

"They do," comes the curt response.

As soon as the smirk begins to form on his face it falls again, as his mind is instead flooded with pictures of him with his arms around Ghost's broad waist, his face buried into rippling back muscles.

"Why so tense, Johnny?" This was not the time for Ghost to find his own sense of humour, especially not with a smile in his voice as he whispered Soap's nickname into his hair. "Never spooned with a lieutenant before?"

Soap grits his teeth and steels his nerves. "No," he barks out, "usually only settle for a captain," and with that, he grabs the hand he'd been eyeing up since it'd left the meat of his belly, and pulls it back over him again.

Naturally, because he can never win at this game, Ghost gives no

reaction to his display other than a soft chuckle, holding him tighter and breathing a soft sigh as his lips just barely ghost the back of his hair.

If someone had told Soap an hour ago that this was where he'd be now, he would've assumed they were ambushed the moment the safehouse door opened and he was bleeding out in a ditch somewhere right now. He'd always wondered how he'd die, and apparently it was at the hands of Simon-fucking-Riley.

He finally decides just to make the most of the situation he's in, letting himself sink into the warmth of the body behind him, noticing the way Ghost's legs so perfectly tuck in behind his own, breath just tickling the tips of his ears. A thought occurs to him and he can't help but giggle, causing Ghost to stir behind him.

"What?"

"Nothing, it's just funny that you always seem to have my back," Soap smiles, widening a little when he feels the vibration of Ghost's hum against his neck this time. He begins to idly draw shapes with his fingertips in the hand that's splayed across his sternum, finding himself wholly content. He needed this. While their current mission had been smooth sailing thus far, long, adrenaline filled days often left him with leftover electricity coursing through him: a livewire with no way to properly ground himself, not when he had to get up the next day and do it all again. And now there was Ghost, warm and strong and exactly where he needed him to be.

Just as he lets his eyelids flutter closed, a cold breeze blows in through the stupid hole in the window that he was this close to shoving a boot in, causing a violent shiver to run through his body. The arm around him tightens a little as the man behind him murmurs his name concernedly. Soap sighs, then gets an idea. He raises his hand and places it over his eyes, saying, "I'm not looking," as he slowly begins to roll over, curling into the lieutenant's chest instead. He's welcomed with open arms that encompass his shoulders, head coming to rest atop a full bicep as his legs tangle themselves up in longer ones. Ghost makes a noise of amusement as Soap blindly nudges up until he can tuck his head under a stubbled chin.

"Comfortable, sergeant?"

"Very, sir," he answers, finally wrapping his arms around that broad waist he's been desperate to hold.

“Good,” Ghost chuckles, raising a hand and slowly beginning to comb his fingers through Soap’s cropped hair.

Soap never thought he’d enjoy having his hair played with. Maybe it was because his only experience with it was having his hair mussed up affectionately by older sergeants while he was a cadet, or by whatever person he’d picked a fight with that’d put him in a headlock, but he finds himself being lulled to sleep by the gentle ministrations. It almost concerns him just how well Ghost is able to read him, like he knows him better than he does himself.

Against the top of his head he feels Ghost’s jaw shift, opening and closing a few times, almost like he’s preparing to say something. When he does, it’s a honeyed whisper that nearly makes him melt. “Close your eyes again, Johnny.”

Soap would never disobey a fucking order again if they were all given like that. He screws them tightly shut, answering *yessir* when asked to confirm, then there’s a light tug at the end of his mohawk, just enough to guide his face away from its hiding spot.

“Keep ‘em closed,” Ghost breathes, so close that Soap couldn’t do more than nod if he wanted to, not with his brain shorting out like it is.

For a few moments there’s nothing, just the sensation of warm breath tickling the hairs of his upper lip, then the hand that had been pulling is cupping the base of his head and there’s a gentle sensation against his lips. It’s not until they’ve left him again that he recognises Ghost’s own lips, chapped and scarred from years of war and disuse behind his mask.

“Sorry,” Ghost whispers after the other is silent for a few moments too long, beginning to try and move away, but the moment Soap gains control over his body again he follows, blindly pulling forward, searching. Thankfully, Ghost realises what he’s looking for and connects their lips again, just as gently, but this time with the added force of Soap’s own reciprocation. It’s not rough, it’s not hungry, it’s not what Soap is used to at all. Ghost sets a soothing pace, continuing to put Soap’s tired mind and body at ease. There’s definite desire there, but that’s for another time, as they become far too busy melting into each other, Soap letting out a breathy sigh as Ghost bites ever-so-softly on his lower lip, licking into his mouth when Soap’s jaw falls slack. It’s warm and a little sloppy but Soap wouldn’t have it any other way, not when he can finally free the butterflies that’d been caged in

his stomach, embarrassment washing away at the realisation that his feelings are requited.

Eventually they separate, both panting softly into each other's mouths as Soap steals one more kiss before pulling back a little further. Ever so slowly, he begins to open his eyes. He starts by looking directly down, gaze slowly drifting up, giving Ghost time to back out, shove him away, cuss him out. When he does none of that, Soap continues, making out the shape of an angular jaw, a small scar that starts at his chin and runs up, bisecting both of those soft lips, a strong nose, and those eyes. Those steely eyes that watch him curiously, framed by lashes that are almost white in contrast to the greasepaint that still coats his brow area. He breaks away from their pull just long enough to acknowledge his hair, short and messy from being freed from the mask.

Soap just stares, mouth agape, for a while, before finally realising that he should say something. "You're blonde." *Beautiful, Johnny. You've bottled it.*

But he can't bring himself to care, not when he can finally *see* the way the corner of his lip quirks up just slightly, as he rolls his eyes and says, "god you're fuckin' dumb."

"Maybe I am. But I bet you like your men stupid," Soap gives him a shit-eating grin, and Ghost's smirk only widens.

"Unfortunately so."

Thankfully, before Soap has a chance to embarrass himself any further, Ghost connects their lips again.

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Alejandro wakes in the early morning, groggily cursing the unforgiving mattress and pillow below him as he works out knots in his shoulders before getting dressed. His immediate plan is to head to the mess hall and get his hands on some rations before the damn Shadows gorge themselves, but he's quickly side-tracked as he glances up the hall, noticing Graves lingering by the door on the end. As he

approaches he hears no chatter, so assumes he isn't interrupting a private conversation with his curiosity.

Graves nods to him as he gets close, and when Alejandro realises he's just standing, looking into the darkened room, the nonchalance of his greeting becomes unnerving; like him watching Ghost sleep isn't mildly unsettling at best, incredibly creepy at worst.

As much as Graves and his lackeys had been incredibly helpful on their mission so far, Alejandro couldn't wait to be rid of them.

"He even sleeps with that thing on," Graves snorts, pointing into the dark bedroom where Ghost lays on his side with his back to them, black ski mask obscuring the back of his head and neck.

"I fear we are the exact reason he does," Alejandro sighs. He feels guilty standing here already, but doesn't at all trust Graves to be alone: and quickly realises he's right to. "Where's Soap?"

"No clue. Probably gelling his hair or something," he dismisses, still focused on the figure in front of them. "I kind of want to sneak a peek," Graves murmurs, sounding far too serious for Alejandro's liking.

"If you value your life, you won't."

"Is that a threat, cowboy?" Graves raises an eyebrow, side eyeing him.

"It's a warning," Alejandro shrugs, not appreciating the Americanised nickname, "Ghost is not a man I would cross."

"I'm not scared of ghosts," Graves waves his hand flippantly, looking directly at him this time "I reckon, with you standing watch, I could-"

Before Alejandro can even begin to declare how he won't be complacent in his scheme, something whistles past both of their faces, so fast that he can't even make it out. Alejandro goes for his gun, assuming that they're under attack, and that's when he sees the knife lodged into the wall inches from Graves's face. They both look back into the dark room, making out Ghost's form, his arm still outstretched from the throw. It's too dark for Alejandro to see exactly where he's looking, but based on the way Graves straightens up in his peripheral, he could make a guess.

"You missed," the American sneers, trying to seem unrattled. Ghost just watches him in silence.

“A wiser man would recognise a warning shot,” Alejandro murmurs, unphased by the pointed glare the man beside him gives.

Graves just looks back into the room, mouth setting like he’s prepared to storm off, but something catches his eye, then that annoying smirk is back. “Ah, there’s Soap.”

Alejandro follows the vague gesture of his hand, noticing a second figure that’d been concealed before, his head tucked in against Ghost’s chest, still fast asleep.

“How sweet, seeing something lovely blossoming in a place li-”

Whatever condescending speech Graves was cooking up is immediately cut off by the fact he has to physically duck the next blade that’s launched at his head, as it embeds itself in the wood right where his ear had been a split second earlier. When he comes back up, he looks ready to threaten Ghost’s job, or maybe his life, but the other man just stares him down, idly flipping another knife.

“Alright, alright, I can see when my presence isn’t wanted,” Graves straightens his rig, trying to use a smile to hide the way he speaks through his teeth, clearly seething, before he marches away, bumping Alejandro’s shoulder as he passes.

“*Pendejo*,” Alejandro murmurs, glancing back at Ghost, who slots away his knife and readjusts Soap’s head just slightly, “how long have you been awake?”

“Since he opened the fuckin’ door.”

Alejandro grunts, pulling the blades from the wall and turning them about in his hands, testing the weight. “Do you think he’ll say anything?”

“Fuck knows,” Ghost grumbles, “I’ll deal with him if he does.”

“*Make him scared of ghosts, hm?* ” He murmurs in his mother tongue, a language he was almost certain Ghost understood but was subtle about, in case someone accidentally said something he wasn’t supposed to hear.

Ghost just gives him an unreadable look in response, accepting his blades as they’re placed back into his hands, placing one in his belt and the other in a slit in the mattress. As he does so, Alejandro gets a good look at Soap for the first time; at the way he’s cradled against

Ghost's side, a hand on his chest and legs tied up in the other's. What stands out most though, is the fact he's swathed in Ghost's own scarf.

"Not a word, soldier," Ghost murmurs.

"Of course not," Alejandro shakes his head, "in our line of work we need people by our side. Gives us something to live for, no?"

Ghost looks at him for a long moment, then nods. "Yeah."

Alejandro nods in turn, heading back toward the door. "I'll give you peace, but I'd suggest getting food soon, those Shadows eat like pigs."

As he pulls the handle shut, the last thing he sees is Ghost turn to the man by his side and press a small kiss to the top of his head.

End Notes

Edit: I love and read every single one of your comments, I only tend to respond to ones that I can think up replies for, but I appreciate every single one <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!